

# Nesting of Great Rosefinch *Carpodacus rubicilla* at Loma, Ladakh, India

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The Great Rosefinch *Carpodacus rubicilla* inhabits open boulder-strewn areas in alpine meadows, fields and sparsely vegetated or desolate areas at 2,500–3000 m in the Caucasus and 3,630–5,000 m (possibly higher) in the Himalayas (Clement *et al.* 1992). It is a fairly common resident, but locally distributed. In the Indian subcontinent it occurs in the northern Himalayas from Chitral, east through Gilgit, Hunza, Ladakh, Lahul, Spiti, Nepal and Sikkim (Ali and Ripley 1999). Relatively little is known about its breeding ecology (Ali and Ripley 1999), but it is known to build cup-shaped nests in rock crevices or low bushes growing out of cliff faces (Roberts 1992). Accounts of nests in shrubs or low in trees (e.g. Baker 1934, Dement'ev and Gladkov 1954, Hüe and Etchécopar 1970) are considered to need further confirmation (Cramp and Perrins 1994).

## OBSERVATIONS

On 13 August 2002, an active nest was found at c.4,200 m at Loma (c.33°09'N 78°59'E) in eastern Ladakh, India. The nest was found in an unoccupied barracks building in an army camp. The cup-shaped nest was 2.5 m above the ground on a wooden beam supporting the roof. The surrounding area was rocky and bereft of any vegetation except along the valley floor. Nest dimensions were not taken so as to avoid disturbance. On 14 August, a brief watch was carried out at 08h00–09h00. The chicks, which were aged c.1 week old, were fed by both parents (nine visits per hour, six by the female, three by the male), who brought a variety of prey items, including grasshoppers and caterpillars from feeding areas 50–150 m away.

Two more nests were found in adjoining buildings 15 m away from the first nest. Both nests were in similar situations, c.2 m above the ground. One nest, attended by a second pair, contained one egg, and the second was empty (possibly old or abandoned). These two nests were measured, and both were 20–23 cm outer diameter, 7–8 cm inner diameter, 13–20 cm high, and the cup was c.5 cm deep. Both were woven from thin twigs, stalks and grass, and lined with yak

and goat hair. The egg was elliptical and glossy, light turquoise, marked at the broad end with scattered black specks and minute dots.

## DISCUSSION

There are no previous records of Great Rosefinch using man-made structures as nesting sites. The composition, structure, and dimensions of the nests were similar to those found in the Caucasus (Cramp and Perrins 1994), but the outer diameter and overall height of the nests were larger. Breeding pairs in Nepal are apparently widely dispersed (Cramp and Perrins 1994), but our observations showed that at least two pairs bred only 15 m apart.

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